1: Washington S-4 (no date) 1956 AF13 Northwest China AF13
Sinkiang AI1

# THE FAMILY

S N 121 59 563 I. Introduction

Northwest China is heavily populated by national minorities. In the province of Sinkiang, the Chinese even form a minority group and the Turkic Moslems constitute the majority. Therefore, in a discussion of the family in this area, general statements applying to the population as a whole would not apply, but a distinction has to be made between several different ethnic elements.

For the purposes of the present section, the following rough division suggests itself: (a) Turkic sedentary Moslems; (b) Turkic nomadic Moslems; (c) the Dungans or Chinese Moslems; (d) the Tibetans; (e) the Mongours; (f) the Mongols, and (g) the Chinese. The last two groups are discussed in detail in their respective handbooks, the IMAR Handbook and the General Handbook of China.

S N 779 59 183 581 Among all Moslems Islam forms the ideal concept of the family. In Islamic society the institution of the family has always been one of primary importance. The family is considered the basic essential of human civilization. Having a family, and being a dutiful member of one, is not only regarded as necessary, but is expressly a religious obligation. Marriage, the step leading to the establishment of a family, is a sacred contract into which each Moslem must enter. A Moslem who, without just reason, does not marry and does [589] not establish a family, is considered almost as a heretic.

S N 59 182 [554] [589] The family's function is primarily for reproduction of the group and the continuation of the family. The institution of the family, furthermore, provides security and peace of mind for its members. The family man is respected and esteemed in Moslem society; he is considered honorable and trustworthy. An unmarried man is likely to be looked upon with some suspicion and distrust.

S N 59 779 183 Since the family plays such a significant role in Moslem society, there is great emphasis on its unity and closeness. This is probably best expressed in the following quotation from the Koran, "...and Allah has made wives for you from yourselves and has given you sons and daughters from your wives." This closeness resulting from the blood relationship is extended to all other phases of family life.

S N 593 Love and compassion should underlie all the relationships within the family. In relations between a man and his wife, or wives, between one kin to another, love is stressed as the basis.

S N [829] A man's behavior within his family reflects his attitude toward society as a whole. If there is love in his heart for his family, he will also have compassion for others and be of service to society.

S N 592 593 In the family, the man's position is always superior to that of the woman, regardless of his age. The wife is, accordingly, put in an inferior position to that of her husband, being under his control completely. The head of the house holds unquestioned authority

563 whether he is going to take all the children, only the boys, or none
586 at all. If the wife has to take care of the sons, the husband is required to pay toward their maintenance.

563 The weakness of their position and the looseness of the marriage
369 tie undoubtedly bear hard on the women in towns, who have no security in their home life. They are subject to divorce at any time, and
586 then may be left with no proper alimony to take care of their needs. The men are given great freedom to act according to whim. Cases are frequent where husbands have legally deserted wives, leaving them with one or more children to look after and insufficient or no maintenance. Conditions are better in the country; but even in towns the position of women is somewhat better than in most other Moslem societies.

## III. Nomadic Moslems of Sinkiang

### A. Family Organization

121 Among the nomadic Turkic Moslems of the Northwest the pat-
59 tern of family organization is somewhat similar to that of the
182 sedentary Turks, with two major distinctions; (a) there is an ele-
563 ment of stability in the family institution of the nomads, in spite
184 of the existent facility for dissolving marriages and contracting new ones, and (b) the influence of Islam is not nearly as strong as it is among the sedentary peoples. These differences are manifested in all aspects of family life, including its nuclear structure. The family unit consists of a man, his wife, and their unmarried
563 children. Cases of divorce and temporary separations are much
586 more rare than among the sedentary Moslems, and consequently
184 the divorcee or separated daughter that often belongs to the sedentary family is absent in the nomadic family. Each family occupies
563 its own tent. The tents of the married sons generally are close
592 to their parents' tent, and close contact between the various house-
342 holds is maintained.

In size, nomadic families equal those of the sedentary popu-
563 lation. Many children, especially sons, are considered a mani-
592 festation of God's blessings. Due to the way of life and dependency
[162] on economic cooperation the relationships within the family are
[184] maintained on a much closer basis. The wife shares much more actively in the economic burden. She takes care of the house, milks the animals, utilizes their products in many different ways (milk products, hides, wool, etc.). The husband's life is less burdened by economic tasks: taking care of the cattle, guarding them, setting the camps, selling, bargaining and hunting. The
[593] relationship between husband and wife is not as greatly influenced by the edicts of Islam. The women are less subject to the complete authority and mercy of their husbands, and to limited social contacts.